



What is a Scaffold?

Scaffold: Temporary structure to support people and materials during work at heights.

Why Do Scaffolds Fail?

Common causes: Poor scaffold maintenance or improper use, faulty design or construction, and inadequate foundation

Start With the Base – Solid Foundation

A scaffold is only as strong as its base. Foundations must:

- Use **base plates** (distribute load over wider area)
- Sit on **mudsills** (further spread load, prevent sinking)
- Be set on a **firm, level foundation** (such as concrete)

Remember:

Never set a scaffold directly on soft ground, loose gravel, or other unstable surfaces.

Platform Safety

- **Fully plank** platforms—no gaps or missing boards
- **Secure guardrails** at all open sides
- **Do not overload** with materials/tools
- **Remove all tools/materials** at end of shift
- **Do not work in high winds or bad weather**

Safe Scaffold Access/Egress: Falls often occur when getting on/off scaffolds.

Employers must provide safe access. Acceptable options:

- Ladders
- Integral (built-in) access
- Stair towers
- Direct access (ramps/walkways if within 14" horizontal/24" vertical of surface)

Never climb scaffold cross-bracing!

Hazards, Protection & Inspection

Major Scaffold Hazards

Falls from Elevation

Caused by missing/inadequate guardrails or a lack of personal fall arrest systems

WA State Law (WAC 296-880-30030): Fall protection is required at **10 feet or higher**

Scaffold Collapse

Can result from instability or overloading

Must consider total weight (scaffold + workers + materials)

Account for foundation, plank placement, tie-ins, and bracing

Being Struck by Falling Objects

Install **toe boards or netting** to stop items from falling

Use **barricades** to keep people out of danger zones under/near scaffolds

Electrocution

Maintain at least **10 feet** from power lines (may require more, based on voltage)

If closer than 10 feet, power must be de-energized or insulated by the utility company

Coordinate with the power company before starting scaffold work

Scaffold Inspection – A Daily Must!

Inspect before each use

Check guardrails, connectors, fastenings, footings, tie-ins, bracing

Tag the scaffold

Use daily inspection tags at the access point

Damaged parts?

Repair or replace **before** use

Who inspects?

A **competent person** trained in scaffold safety

Re-inspect after:

Any event that may have compromised structural integrity (e.g., severe weather, impact, modifications)

Remember:

- Use **proper base plates and mudsills**
- Ensure all platforms are **fully planked and secured**
- **Never overload** scaffolds
- Use **safe access**—no climbing on braces!
- **Install guardrails, toe boards, and netting**
- Stay clear of **overhead power lines**
- **Inspect every day** and tag the scaffold
- Only a **competent person** should direct and inspect scaffold work